

Current Support Brief

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21 December 1962

CZECHOSLOVAK ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPENING
OF FIRST PETROCHEMICAL PLANT
MAY BE MISLEADING



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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According to Rude Pravo, the Duslo Chemical Combine at Sal'a nad Vahom in Czechoslovakia was put into partial operation early in November 1962. 1/ Circumstances attending the initial production, however, suggest that completion of the basic sections of the combine, which involves the application of petrochemical technology, is running behind schedule and that announcement of the opening of the combine may have been premature.

The combine is to be one of Czechoslovakia's largest chemical installations and is the first of several petrochemical installations planned or being constructed in Czechoslovakia. Construction of the combine, which began in 1958, is expected to cost 500 million crowns. (About US \$70 million at the official rate of exchange of 7.2 crowns to US \$1. This rate, however, significantly overstates the value of Czechoslovak investment.) When completed, in 1965, the combine will employ 1,500 to 2,000 workers. During the first of two planned stages of construction, the combine is to produce mainly nitrogen fertilizer (calcium ammonium nitrate) along with ammonia and nitric acid, but in the second stage the range of products is to be increased to include acetic acid, acetaldehyde, vinyl acetate, urea, thermal phosphates, plastics, and chloroprene synthetic rubber. 2/ The combine is scheduled to become, on completion, the largest Czechoslovak producer of nitrogen fertilizer, accounting for about one-third of the total amount of 300,000 metric tons of nitrogen fertilizer to be produced in Czechoslovakia in 1965. 3/

The combine figures prominently in Czechoslovak plans for the expansion of chemical production, and its development is to be a key element in building up the chemical industry in industrially underdeveloped Slovakia. In contrast to the national goal of raising output of the entire chemical industry in 1965 by 97 percent compared with 1960, the goal for the chemical

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industry in Slovakia alone was to raise output by 165 percent. ^{4/} Although the Third Five Year Plan (1961-65) was replaced in August 1962 by a Seven Year Plan (1964-70), heavy emphasis has remained on the chemical industry and the increased production of fertilizer, pesticides, chemical fibers, synthetic rubber, and plastics.

The announcement of the opening of the combine, however, seems to be misleading. The utilization of natural gas from western Slovakia as a raw material, a technology new to Czechoslovakia, is to be employed to obtain ammonia, the necessary starting chemical for production of both nitrogen fertilizer and an intermediate product, nitric acid. No production of ammonia, however, has taken place at the combine as yet. The initial output at the combine consisted of nitrogen fertilizer and nitric acid, using technologies already well known and established in Czechoslovakia. This fact suggests that ammonia probably had to be shipped in from a distance of at least 200 kilometers. The initial production of nitrogen fertilizer and nitric acid, therefore, appears to have been a makeshift to placate President Novotny, who had set 1 October 1962 as the deadline for initial production at this plant. ^{5/} The fact that the ammonia is not yet in production at the plant suggests further that the Czechoslovaks may be experiencing difficulties in putting the basic petrochemical sections of the plant into operation. In spite of the economic disadvantages of transporting ammonia a considerable distance, the combine probably was opened for reasons of prestige.

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Coord: [REDACTED]

Sources:

1. Czechoslovakia. Rude pravo, 5 Nov 62, p. 1. U.
2. CIA. FDD Translation no U-3056574-C, Selected Information on East European Industrial Plants, Reel 938, 1 Aug 60.
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JPRS. 10656, Summary of the Czechoslovak Provincial Press, 20 Oct 61, p. 7. U.

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3. [REDACTED]
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5. [REDACTED]

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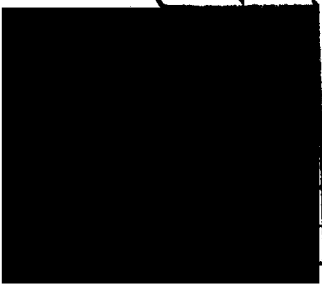


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